

Preface

What is one of the most important ideas about parenting—an idea that would benefit most parents? That is what this book is about. That question was answered by people who work with families, people who have studied the wisdom of parenting from scholars before them, people who care about you, your family, and your child or children. This book will share key parenting ideas by way of short articles or short descriptions in the last chapter.

During the last century, many approaches and theories have evolved, which you will discover more clearly in this book. It is filled with interesting, intriguing, insightful, and moving articles. In the last chapter, “Wisdom of the Ages,” you will get a glimpse of key concepts of parenting as developed over the past eight or so decades.

Sometimes you will hear: “This book will give you all of the answers you will ever need!” No one should ever try to convince you that there is only one parenting book you will ever need or that there is one *best* parenting approach. This book **will be** a very helpful resource for you, but it is not the only parenting book you will ever need or want.

Unfortunately, some authors (not all, by any means) will infer or actually say that their approach is the one to use—when, in fact, it likely is not true. Such authors do a grave disservice to parents as well as other authors, theorists, and the broad parenting movement itself. Suggesting there is only one approach often leads to confusion for parents, causing them to think, “Whom can I believe? Why are there so many books out there on parenting when an author says I only need his/her book?” Or, parents might conclude: “The experts contradict each other, telling us different things to do, so why listen to them. We might just as well ignore them and do what common sense tells us!”—forgetting about Albert Einstein’s observation, “common sense isn’t too common.”

Sometimes a given technique will work best with one problem or with a child with a particular temperament, or in some situations and not in others. Or, one parent may be drawn to one approach while another parent will not feel comfortable using it. Children are different, situations are different, parents are different, and approaches will differ. As parents we make a lot of choices about which method to use, sometimes trying a variety of ways before discovering which one works best—for us, for our child, in some particular situation. We hope that reading this book will provide you with more options for being a more effective parent.

An old proverb says, “*There’s more than one way to skin a cat.*” Likewise, there usually are a number of ways to handle a given child-rearing problem. And so, in a way, we parent educators owe a

collective apology to parents for some of the confusion they may have felt. It is our sincere hope that this book will help clarify some of this.

In terms of parenting programs offered in a community, there are many in which a parent can enroll. Honestly, over time, a parent likely would benefit by enrolling in several. Also, it is good to realize that most parenting programs and books all deal a little bit with some aspect of “communication skills.” Our experience indicates that to significantly improve one’s communication skills, more than a focus of just two or three sessions is needed. An actual parenting program of eight to ten sessions just focusing on communication skills would be best. An alternative to attending such a program would be to thoroughly read a book like Tom Gordon’s, *P.E.T.: Parent Effectiveness Training* (mentioned later in this book), or Faber & Mazlish’s book, *How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk*.

When Reading the Book:

You will find that many of the articles include references to various sources which might be of interest or helpful. Of course, some of the references are cited merely to provide support for what is being conveyed, making reference to research studies, evidence-based programs, or supporting theories.

Internet web sites often are listed for your use. Rather than meticulously trying to copy each letter of the address, or URL, you can merely Google an author’s name and/or most of the title or words in the link and find the web site in that manner.

Read with Unhurried Reflection. We suggest that you read the articles with a reflective attitude, thinking of how the ideas might apply to your family or to your own actions. Try not to clutter your mind by reading too many articles during one sitting. For some articles, it might help to read the article again, after a day or so, reviewing the key ideas and gaining other impressions or ideas from its message. One researcher found that change comes best if we re-visit ideas in a couple of days and reinforce them by reading the ideas (or articles) again in about a week. Also, discussing an article in a book club, a parenting education group, or a college class would provide the perspectives of others and help you further reflect and apply what you have read.

Special Thanks to Michael H. Popkin

In 1984, within a year of the development of Michael Popkin’s popular video based *Active Parenting* program (evolving now into Active Parenting Publishers, www.activeparenting.com), Popkin led a workshop which Co-Editor Keim attended. Impressed with Popkin’s interpretation of the Adlerian approach (based essentially on

the work of Rudolf Dreikurs, *Children: The challenge*, 1964), Keim began using Popkin's materials in his teaching, while also presenting other parenting approaches.

Of special note was Popkin's sharing of a humorous story of a fellow psychologist who had what he called his "Ten Ironclad Rules of Parenting." Then he had his own children and changed the name to "10 Guidelines for Parenting." "Now that my children are becoming teenagers," he said, "I'm thinking about changing it once again to 'Ten Helpful Hints.'"

This story, told by Michael Popkin, prompted Keim to develop his own "10." They were called the "10 Commandments for Parents" which he felt were important to share with most parents, although he realized that they might well have been titled: "10 Possible Ideas that Might Work Some of the Time with Some of Your Children; Good Luck!"

This concept of "key ideas," inspired by Popkin, is what led to the concept of this *wisdom* book. While attending a parent education focus group at an annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), the idea of this book occurred. Very special thanks go to Michael Popkin for the results.

More on How this Book Came About

Slightly over 1,300 Certified Family Life Educators (CFLEs) were essentially asked this question: "What is your favorite, most important or unique *wisdom* or pet theme which you feel most parents should hear about regarding raising their children?" This book is the result of their responses, with spontaneous writings on topics they believe are very important for you to hear. The emphasis tends to be more upon character building, parent-child relationships, and guidance and discipline issues. Also, you will read some personal experience stories which convey the author's message, as well as several poems.

As mentioned earlier, there is a concluding, more comprehensive chapter on "Wisdom of the Ages," which includes parenting wisdom from writers and scholars spanning the past decades—wisdom that tends to not grow old, but still applies. You will find some unique and useful topics that have been "buried" over time in past writings. Some of the early articles in the book may allude to ideas you will read about in the last chapter; however, in it you will discover the roots of many of the childrearing approaches available today, under different names and different packaging. Granted, some of today's programs are seeking newer and more effective ways to convey these ideas to parents in different settings. So, upon reading the last chapter, you might begin to recognize the sources of some of the programs you encounter today. There are not too many brand new ideas today; often they are "discoveries" of the "wisdom of the ages."

We hope that you will read all of the articles in the spirit in which they were shared—*wisdom* that is spoken from the hearts of the authors, other men and women who happen to have focused their life's work on families and parenting issues. It is hoped that the articles help you in the task of raising your own children to become adults of whom you will be proud.

The CFLE authors are donating the proceeds of their writings to further the work of the CFLE program of the National Council of Family Relations.

A Note to College Teachers

This book, written to parents, may serve as a useful supplement for parent education, child development or marriage and family studies classes, providing helpful resources for students to use themselves or with parents. Students also may benefit from seeing the translation of theory and research into information for parents. Articles could serve well as a focus for group discussion on various topics. The first two items in the Appendix are guidelines to help facilitate group discussion.

Who Is a Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE)?

The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) headquartered in Minneapolis, provides certification for the profession of family life education. Certification is awarded through completion of a CFLE-track of courses at one of over 120 NCFR approved academic programs,* or through the completion of the CFLE Exam. In order to receive Full Certification, work experience in family life education must be demonstrated.

The CFLE program encourages applications from professionals with preparation and experience in family education, including formal teaching, research/scholarship, community education, public information and education, curriculum and resource development, health care, military family support, and ministry. Certified Family Life Educators have a minimum of a bachelor's degree; many CLFEs have advanced degrees.

* For approved college programs, see: www.ncfr.org/cert/academic/programs/.

Chose a job you love, and you will never have to
work a day in your life.
— *Confucius*

A Post Script by Keim: Gold Stars for Parents

For many years now, I have carried some Gold Star stickers in the side pocket of my datebook. The Gold Stars are for one purpose, to give them to a parent whom I see interacting or handling their child or children in a most loving, caring, patient, or thoughtful manner. The occasions occur in grocery stores, in restaurants, at airports, or wherever. When I observe such an event (often saying to myself, “wow, that parent is really handling this situation well!”) I do the following.

The parent is approached and I say to them in a friendly tone: “Trust me; I want to give you something. Would you please get out your billfold (or wallet)? I’m not going to steal it from you. I just want to give you something.” As I’m saying that, I’m also start to getting my own datebook out of my side pocket and pulling out the sheet of Gold Stars. When the parent gets out their billfold (no one has ever refused), I ask them to open it up. Invariably, there is some open space on the inside covering of the wallet. I then say, “I want to put this Gold Star here, as a reminder to you of what a good parent you are,” and we select a good place to put it. “It was very sweet (or ‘a pleasure’) to have just watched you and your child interact. You’ve been handling the situation so well (or ‘It has been a delight to see you both.’). I wish you the very best,” smiling at them during these last couple of sentences, as I center the star in the open space. And then we both move along with whatever we were doing.

If you ever have trouble finding some small sheets of Gold Stars, search the internet for ‘gold star stickers’ or go to www.wisdomforparents.com and you’ll see instructions for getting some. It will give you a joy to have an occasion to give one to a parent and see the grateful and pleased reaction. Don’t do it for just every good parent behavior; wait for those “WOW” occasions.

No one can give you wisdom. You must discover it for yourself, on the journey through life, which no one can take for you.

— Sun Bear
